

From: John Jacobs
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 12/13/01 1:46pm
Subject: Microsoft Anti-Trust Settlement

To Whom It May Concern:

(I'm not sure if this is the right e-mail address or not for responding to the antitrust settlement that was proposed about a month ago. If it's not please disregard this e-mail and I truly apologize for incorrectly sending it.)

I wanted to state that I'm not comfortable with the settlement as it stands now. I can't see where any part of it will truly limit Microsoft from using its same predatory acts to force people to use software they don't want. The main issue I have is with Microsoft "tying" code for ordinary applications into its operating system and then calling it necessary for the functionality of the operating system. That's a lie. The operating system (Windows) worked before without the code, and other OSes have those same types of applications and they don't require the applications to be "tied" in order for the OS to work.

This whole issue could be solved if Microsoft would just "componentize" its operating system. Let me explain. Microsoft "tied" Internet Explorer to its operating system because it stated that it would be the user a better 'user experience' when using a computer. The concept/direction they chose to better the customer's experience in and of itself is not wrong. In fact, Microsoft will be the first to admit that that's why they did it in the first place. The problem is that the way they went about it was wrong. Instead of "tying" the browser to the operating system, they could have made it a component (much like the plug-in concept in most other applications). This means that, if coded to a pre-set list of APIs, a browser can be "plugged into" the operating system; thereby, allowing the user to use the browser's interface to navigate through his/her computer. Obviously, since Microsoft will have created the APIs, their browser would be the first one capable of working with the "new Windows feature". However, now other browser companies could tailor their browser to work with this new feature if they wanted to. This would promote healthy competition by allowing multiple companies to write a component (in this case a browser) to work with the new operating system feature. This also gives the users the experience that they wanted as well as the freedom to choose which company they want to deliver that feature to them.

The component concept described above would easily apply to all other areas of debate that are currently be discussed in the anti-trust case. This way Microsoft can keep their code that's behind the APIs secret; and yet still open the feature up to other companies so their applications can work with it if they so choose. In short, Microsoft's current philosophy of "tying" the feature to the operating system and then stating that the operating system wouldn't work without it is wrong. If they are forced to build these features as components (or plug-ins), then we wouldn't be in the anti-trust nightmare we are currently in.

Therefore, in my personal opinion, I would be happy with any anti-trust settlement that forced Microsoft to stop providing a feature to users by "tying" it to the operating system, but provide it as a component plug-in so other companies are free to come up with something better if desired. This would be a win-win for the users, third-party companies, Microsoft and the government.

Thank you for your time.

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